

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 14068 221426Z

11
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

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R 221237Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8559
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJ: MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS CHANGES HANDS

REF: NEW DELHI 11564

1. REFTEL DESCRIBED ILLNESS AND STRANGE CONDUCT OF MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZER PCSETHI. SETHI FUNCTIONED ERRATICALLY DURING THE RECENT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION AND HIS CONTINUING ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED PM TO SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS MINISTRY TO K.D. MALAVIYA IN ADDITION TO LATTER'S CURRENT PORTFOLIO OF PETROLEUM. THE ANNOUNCEMTN OF THE CHANGE WAS MADE PUBLIC SEPTEMBER 22 BUT WITHOUT EXPLANATION. SETHI'S RESPONSIBILITIES AS CONGRESS PARTY TREASURER HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN SHIFTED TO MINSTATE FOR STEEL AND MINES, CHANDRAJIT YADAV.

2. ONE SOURCE TELLS US THAT SETHI HAD TOLD HIM SEVERAL WEEKS AGO THAT PM HAD RECOMMENDED HE TO TO SWITZERLAND FOR A MONTH OR SO FOR MEDICAL CARE. SETHI SAID HE WOULD NOT AGREE TO DO SO.

3. COMMENT: WE ARE NOT SURE ABOUT THE RUMOR OF YADAV'S
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TAKING OVER THE CONGRESS TREASURY. AS A FORMER

COMMUNIST AND ONE OF THE FEW HARD-LINE "LEFTISTS" IN THE CABINET, HE WOULD NOT SEEM TO BE THE MOST LOGICAL CHOICE FOR THE PM (AND SANJAY) AT THIS POINT. SETHI DOES NOT CARRY MUCH POLITICAL WEIGHT IN HIS HOME STATE OF MADHYA PRADESH, BUT HIS DEPARTURE WILL BE SEEN WITH RELIEF BY THE PRESENT CHIEF MINISTER SC SHUKLA AND HIS BROTHER, MIN INFO AND BROADCASTING VC SHUKLA, BOTH OF WHOM CORDIALLY DETEST AND DO NOT GET ON WITH SETHI. SAXBE

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